

INTERPRETER

— ∞ —
A JOURNAL OF MORMON SCRIPTURE

Volume 9 · 2014 · Pages 1-27

Founded Upon a Rock: Doctrinal and Temple Implications of Peter's Surnaming

Matthew L. Bowen

Offprint Series

© 2014 The Interpreter Foundation. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

The goal of The Interpreter Foundation is to increase understanding of scripture through careful scholarly investigation and analysis of the insights provided by a wide range of ancillary disciplines, including language, history, archaeology, literature, culture, ethnohistory, art, geography, law, politics, philosophy, etc. Interpreter will also publish articles advocating the authenticity and historicity of LDS scripture and the Restoration, along with scholarly responses to critics of the LDS faith. We hope to illuminate, by study and faith, the eternal spiritual message of the scriptures—that Jesus is the Christ.

Although the Board fully supports the goals and teachings of the Church, Interpreter Foundation is an independent entity and is neither owned, controlled by nor affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or with Brigham Young University. All research and opinions provided are the sole responsibility of their respective authors, and should not be interpreted as the opinions of the Board, nor as official statements of LDS doctrine, belief or practice.

This journal is a weekly publication. Visit us at MormonInterpreter.com

FOUNDED UPON A ROCK: DOCTRINAL AND TEMPLE IMPLICATIONS OF PETER'S SURNAMING

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: The famous Petros/petra wordplay in Matthew 16:18 does not constitute Jesus's identification of Peter as the "rock" upon which his church would be built. This wordplay does however identify him with that "rock" or "bedrock" inasmuch as Peter, a small "seer-stone," had the potential to become like the Savior himself, "the Rock of ages." One aspect of that "rock" is the revelation that comes through faith that Jesus is the Christ. Other aspects of that same rock are the other principles and ordinances of the gospel, including temple ordinances. The temple, a symbol of the Savior and his body, is a symbol of the eternal family—the "sure house" built upon a rock. As such, the temple is the perfect embodiment of Peter's labor in the priesthood, against which hell will not prevail.

When the Savior answered Simon Peter's averred testimony "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" with the declaration, "thou art Peter [*Petros*], and upon this rock [*petra*] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:16, 18), he was not identifying Peter himself as the actual *petra* ("bedrock") upon which Christ's church would be built. The *Petros/petra* wordplay in this dialogue, however, does suggest that Jesus was ascribing potential "bedrock" strength to his chief disciple. Peter was a

stone “cut” or “hewn”¹ from this bedrock, “*the Rock of ages*” or “Rock of *eternity*” or “everlasting strength” (*ṣûr ‘ôlāmîm*, Isaiah 26:4),² a stone with potential “bedrock” power in the priesthood.³

Jesus’s words are an invitation to Simon, the future leader of Christ’s church, to “climb up” by him—to become more like “Messiah, the King of Zion, the *Rock of Heaven*, which is broad as *eternity*.”⁴ Yahweh, as God of Israel, is described in the Hebrew Bible as “rock” (Hebrew *ṣûr*, or less frequently, *sela’*). The “rock” wordplay together with the promise of priesthood keys (Matthew 16:19) was an invitation to *theosis*, (i.e., for Peter to *become* a “partakers of the divine nature”)⁵ in more than the sense of a temporary transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–9).⁶ Later, Peter the fully converted bedrock-like high priest and president of the Church invites all saints to *theosis* (2 Peter 1:4)—to become, like him, “living stone”⁷ built into a “spiritual house” or temple founded upon Jesus Christ⁸ and his gospel. Through the priesthood keys and sealing power that Peter received

1 Eric D. Huntsman, “Galilee and the Call of the Twelve Apostles,” in *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From Bethlehem through the Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 242.

2 All scriptural citations are from the KJV unless otherwise indicated. Isaiah 26:4 renders *ṣûr ‘ôlāmîm* as “everlasting strength.” Rock connotes “strength” (i.e., priesthood power).

3 See Acts 3:6; cf. Luke 5:23.

4 Moses 7:53; cf. Isaiah 26:4

5 2 Peter 1:4.

6 See S. Kent Brown, “The Twelve,” in *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 119–120.

7 Richard Lloyd Anderson (“Simon Peter,” *Ensign*, February 1975, 47) writes: “In Christ’s leading disciple there was a living stone that he encouraged all members of the church to be” (1 Pet. 2:5).

8 On the centrality of Christ as the foundation stone in Peter’s theology, see Frederick R. Howe, “Christ, the Building Stone in Peter’s Theology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157/625 (2000): 35–43.

and the temple ordinances performed under that priesthood authority, the saints' families can become "sure houses."

In this paper I will discuss Jesus's "surnaming" Simon as *Petros* and its implications in the context of Jesus's "rock" teachings and the restored gospel. When other scriptural instances of Jesus's use of the "rock" metaphor are considered, it is clear that he envisions the *petra* of Matthew 16:18 as much broader than the person of Peter the apostle or the testimony that Peter received by revelation. Elsewhere Jesus identifies his own teachings⁹—the revealed truth of the fullness of the everlasting gospel¹⁰ including its ordinances¹¹—as the "rock" on which the saints' "houses" are to be built.¹²

Thus the "rock" is not only a testimony of faith revealed from the Father that Jesus is the Christ but also the covenant obedience ("hearing") and adherence to the "doctrine of Christ" that signifies reception of this testimony. This covenant of obedience in turn leads to further revelation, the obtaining of temple blessings, generational power in the priesthood, and sanctification in Christ (*theosis*). Hell—the powers of darkness in the spirit world—has never prevailed against the Church because of priesthood keys bestowed upon Peter. Peter and his counterparts in the latter days have had priesthood authority and keys bestowed upon them to ensure that the Church and its families are "sure" houses "founded upon [the] rock." Taken as one great whole, the Savior and his everlasting gospel are indeed a "Rock...broad as eternity," a rock upon which if we build our personal and family foundations, we can "never fall."¹³

9 His "sayings," Matthew 7:24–26.

10 E.g., faith, repentance.

11 Baptism, reception of the Holy Ghost, etc.

12 See 3 Nephi 11:28–40; cf. 2 Nephi 31; JST Hebrews 6:1.

13 Moses 7:53; Helaman 5:12.

Simon: “Whosoever *Heareth* These Sayings...and Doeth Them” (Matthew 7:24–26)

A christological reading of Psalm 118:22, “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner,” yields the interpretation that the “builders”—temple builders—are Israel’s religious leaders.¹⁴ It is in light of this reading of Psalm 118:22 that Jesus’s words in Matthew 7:24–27 are to be understood. Jesus caps his Sermon on the Mount by likening the one “hearing” his sayings to a “wise” temple builder¹⁵ who used *petra* as his foundation:

Therefore whosoever *heareth* [*akouei* = Heb. *šōmēa*] these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, [who] built his house upon a *rock* [*petran*]:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a *rock* [*petran*].

And every one that *heareth* these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, [who] built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.¹⁶

14 See especially Peter’s use of this text in Acts 4:11 and 1 Peter 2:7; Psalm 118:22 is similarly quoted and interpreted in Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; and Luke 20:17.

15 Cf. Paul’s description of his own “building” ecclesiastical role (1 Corinthians 3:10).

16 Matthew 7:24–27; cf. Luke 6:4–49, emphasis added.

Matthew 5:1–2, Joseph Smith Translation (hereafter JST), and Matthew 7:28 suggest that Jesus directed these words specifically to the disciples—the future “builders” of his church—and Simon Peter himself in the hearing of the people. If, as John 1:42 indicates, Jesus “surnamed” Simon *Cephas*/*Petros* early in his ministry, references to both “hearing” and “rock,” conceivably constitute wordplay on “Simon” and “Cephas”/“Peter,” similar to the “rock”-dialogue later in Matthew 16:13–20. This suggests a deeper connection between Peter, the temple, and all of Jesus’s “rock” teachings.

The name “Simon” is a Hellenized form¹⁷ of the personal and tribal name “Simeon,” which had become popular because of the Hasmonean revolt and fervor in Judea for national restoration.¹⁸ To the Hebrew ear, “Simeon” would have connoted something like “man of hearing” or “hearer,”¹⁹ (i.e., “obedient”), not simply “the Lord has heard” as implied in the etiological literary pun in Genesis 33:19.²⁰

Simeon is an ancient name that has at least one pre-Israelite temple connection. Enoch describes a theophany in which “there came a voice out of heaven” and commanded him to “turn...and get...upon mount Simeon” and subsequently “beheld the heavens open, and...was clothed upon with glory, and saw the Lord” and talked with him, “even as a man talketh one with another face-to-face” and was “show[n] the world for the space of many generations.”²¹ Enoch’s “temple” experience

17 Huntsman (“Galilee and the Call of the Twelve,” 220) notes in addition that Andrew and Phillip are Greek names. This suggests a strong Greek influence in the Galilee area.

18 See Markus Bockmuehl, “Simon Peter’s Names in Jewish Sources,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 55/1 (2004): 58–80.

19 cf. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1576–77.

20 Genesis 29:33: “And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the Lord hath heard [*šāma*] that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name *Simeon* [*šim’ôn*].”

21 Moses 7:2–4.

on Mount Simeon was revealed to the prophet at about the same time he began to receive revelations concerning the building of the temple.²² The connection of Simeon with the “voice” of the Lord coming out of heaven would have evoked the idea of “place of hearing” for an ancient Israelite audience, since the *-ôn* ending on “Simeon” was “a particular nominal or adjectival form serving as an appellative”²³ that “describ[ed] some feature or aspect”²⁴ of the thing so named. Thus, under this grammatical model, “Simeon” as a toponym means “place of hearing” and as a personal name means “person [man] of hearing.” F. F. Bruce observes that it is a “well-known principle of nomenclature” to bestow a positive name “in the fond hope that the attachment of [the] name of good omen” will inspire the one so named to become so. The parental hope²⁵ for an Israelite named Simeon (Simon) was that he would be a constant “hearer” in the sense of characteristically “obedient.” In Hebrew, to “hear” *was* to “obey.”

An Israelite’s foremost responsibility, according to the covenant, was to “hear” and “obey” God’s instruction (*tôrâ*; see especially the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4). Deuteronomy emphasizes “loving” God by “hearing” (i.e., obeying) and keeping his commandments,²⁶ a principle conveyed most

22 December 1830; see D&C 36:8.

23 Anson F. Rainey, “The Toponymics of Eretz-Israel,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 231 (Oct., 1978) 5. In the same article, Rainey further suggests a possible connection between name “Simeon” and Arabic *sim’*, “hyena dog” (a rare and uncertain term). While I agree with Rainey’s assessment of the grammar of *-ôn* names, the far simpler explanation is that “Simeon” is an appellative that denotes something characterized by “hearing.”

24 Ibid., 4. On Hebrew *-ôn* names in the Book of Mormon, see Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, “Notes and Communications: The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 258.

25 F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 402.

26 See Deuteronomy 5:10, 7:9; 11:1, 13, 22 13:3; 19:9; 30:16, 19–20.

succinctly in Jesus's statement, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Was Israel to hear the commandments of God or of men? This fundamental issue, raised by Jesus during his ministry,²⁷ was one with which Simon Peter, who "savor[ed] the things of men," had to wrestle.²⁸ Jesus condemned the teaching and observance of the "commandments of men," especially where such "traditions" encouraged the "laying aside" of God's commandments.²⁹ Eventually, Peter can declare without hesitation, "We ought to *obey* God rather than men" (Acts 5:29, emphasis added). The restoration was needed because religious leaders "[taught] for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but...deny the power thereof" (JS-H 1:19).

Jesus's description of a wise builder who hears and does is directed, on one level, to Simon himself but on another to every church member. Jesus's "sayings," which included a warning against being as salt which has "lost its savor" (are not "the commandments of men" but rather divine "revelation" (Matthew 5:13) in the purest sense. The manner in which obedience to his sayings is to be shown has been the same from the very beginning—what Nephi termed the "doctrine of Christ"³⁰ and Christ's "gospel" and "rock" (1 Nephi 13:6). These principles and ordinances,³¹ when taught and performed with priesthood power and "authority," are the "doctrine" at which people were—and are—"astonished."³² Jesus's sayings or doctrine—"every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"³³—constitute an important aspect of what Jesus means

27 Mark 7:7–8; Matthew 15:9.

28 Mark 8:33; Matthew 16:23.

29 See Mark 7:7–8.

30 2 Nephi 31:2, 21; 32:6; cf. Jacob 7:2, 6; 2 John 1:9.

31 See Hebrews 6:1; Articles of Faith 1:4.

32 Matthew 7:28; 22:24–33; Mark 1:22; 11:28; Luke 4:32; Acts 13:12.

33 Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; D&C 84:44.

when he alludes to the rock on which we are to build (i.e., “hearken...and hold fast unto it”—Nephi 15:24).

A “New Name”: The Surnaming of Simon Peter

Simon Peter was called and later chosen to build the Church on Christ’s doctrine. John 1:42 suggests that Jesus surnamed Simon as Cephas (“stone”; Aramaic *kîpā*’ = Greek *Petros*) early in his ministry,³⁴ apparently well before the events detailed in Matthew 16. JST John 1:42 suggests that this new name *kîpā*’ can be rendered either as “stone” or “seer,” (i.e., a “seer-stone”). The name Cephas/Peter is thus a kind of prophecy regarding the man—his potential leadership capabilities, including power in the priesthood and receptivity to revelation, a point reiterated when Jesus’s instruction plays on Cephas/Peter in Matthew 16:18. Jesus—the Rock of Ages—lovingly surnamed Simon with this new name, knowing what the latter could and would become: a steadfast and constant conduit of revelation. Jesus reminded Simon Peter of this potential in his conversation with him in Matthew 16:13-20 and chastised Peter when he “savored” his own ideas more than the divine revelation that Jesus had just given him (Matthew 16:21-23).

Few passages of scripture have elicited as much debate as Jesus’s words to Peter in Matthew 16:18, part of the so-called “rock dialogue,” with its wordplay on *Petros/petra*. The three most common interpretive approaches are that “the apostle so named [Peter], or the affirmation he has just made”³⁵ are the “bedrock” of which Jesus speaks or that it is Jesus himself.³⁶

34 See also Mark 3:16.

35 Fredrick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 809.

36 PHEME PERKINS, “Peter, The Apostle,” in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 4:476.

The first approach³⁷ interprets the wordplay as though Jesus is making the straightforward declaration, "Thou art Peter, and upon thee I will build my church" (*not* Jesus's words). The second approach,³⁸ on the other hand, draws insufficient meaning from the lexical relationship between *Petros* and *petra* in the Greek text as we now have it. The third approach tends to diminish Peter's role in the building Jesus describes. All three approaches have merit, yet none by itself is adequate.

Eric Huntsman explains the force of the wordplay in the Greek text—"Petros, the name Jesus gave *Peter* at his initial call means an isolated rock or stone, whereas *Petra*, a feminine noun, means bedrock, the type of rock of which a tomb was hewn or the foundation of an impregnable position or rocky fortress...Thus although Peter's subsequent apostolic career revealed that he was indeed a rock, the rock upon which the Church would be built was the rock from which Peter as an Apostle was hewn."³⁹ Peter had to grow into the role that the "new name" *Petros* implied (prophet, seer, and revelator), let alone that of the divine "bedrock." As Gerald Janzen has noted, "In the act of envisioning Jesus as Messiah,⁴⁰ he in turn found himself envisaged as Peter—a name wildly at variance with his actual character up to that point, a name later needing reinstatement through forgiveness,⁴¹ yet a name whose

37 See, e.g., Raimund Lülldorff, "Vom Stein zum Felsen: Anmerkungen zur biblischen Begründung des Petrusamtes nach Mt 16,18," *Catholica* 44/4 (1990): 274-283; S. Carnazzo, "The Primacy of Peter in Sacred Scripture—Part 2," *Eastern Churches Journal: A Journal of Eastern Christendom* 12/2 (2005): 13-27. T. Finley hypothesizes that Jesus spoke these words in Aramaic and that *kîpā* could underlie both *Petros* and *petra*, based on evidence from the Targums and Syriac versions of Matthew ("‘Upon this Rock’: Matthew 16.18 and the Aramaic Evidence," *Aramaic Studies* 4/2, 2006, 133-51).

38 See, e.g., P. Grelot, "'Sur cette pierre je bâtirai mon Église' (Mt 16, 18b)" *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 109/5 (1987): 641-59.

39 Huntsman, "Galilee and the Call of the Twelve Apostles," 242.

40 Matthew 16:13-20.

41 John 22:1-23.

accuracy was eventually born out.”⁴² Simon would not only be *Petros*,⁴³ but *prôtos*⁴⁴ (“first”).⁴⁵ He was not the founder or the foundation, but he would become the chief “builder.”

The Rock of Faith and Revelation: Revealed Testimony that Jesus is the Christ and Continuing Revelation

On a fundamental level, the *petra* of which Jesus speaks includes the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, which is the content of Peter’s confession or testimony.⁴⁶ As Huntsman notes, “In the context of Peter’s preceding declaration [in Matthew 16:16]... Jesus’s statement may be interpreted to mean that the Church would be built upon the apostolic testimony of Christ that comes through revelation.”⁴⁷ Indeed, Peter, followed by the other Apostles, accepted Jesus as the Christ, whereas Israel’s religious leaders—the temple builders of Psalm 118:22—had rejected him.⁴⁸ The Savior, the premortal Yahweh, had ever been a sanctuary to many in Israel and “rock of offense” and “stone of stumbling”⁴⁹ to others. Peter and his fellow apostles were

42 J. Gerald Janzen, “What’s in a Name? ‘Yahweh’ in Exodus 3 and the Wider Biblical Context,” *Interpretation* 33/ 3 (1979): 239. See also A. Stock, “Is Matthew’s Presentation of Peter Ironic?” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17/2 (1987): 64–69.

43 D. Bivin (“Matthew 16:18: The Petros-petra Wordplay—Greek, Aramaic, or Hebrew?” *Jerusalem Perspective*, Vol. 46–47 [1994]: 32–38) suggests that *petros* and *petra*, as Greek loanwords, may have been words that Jesus used. Cf. *petra* in *Yalkut Shimoni* to Numbers 23:9.

44 B. van Iersel, “Matteüs 16, 18: Simôn, Petros, petra, prôtos: Reflectie op woordspelingen rond Simon, de steenrots (Mt. 16, 18: Simôn, Petros, petra, prôtos),” *Tijdschrift voor Theologie*, 4 (1985): 402–409. He notes the play on *Petros* and *prôtos* in Matthew 10:2.

45 Compare Matthew 10:2 to 1 Nephi 1:11.

46 On Peter’s confession of faith as the “rock,” see Chrys C. Caragounis, *Peter and the Rock* (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1990), passim; Grelot, “Sur cette pierre,” 641–59.

47 Huntsman, “Galilee and the Call of the Twelve Apostles,” 242.

48 See especially 1 Peter 2:6–8.

49 Isaiah 8:14; 1 Peter 2:8.

priesthood holders (“living stones”) rejected by the builders in like manner.⁵⁰

In a text in which he decries Israel’s illicit “covenant with death” and “hell,”⁵¹ Isaiah envisions the Lord as the builder (or “founder”), the stone, and “the sure foundation” of a building that will result in the “disannulment” or “atoning” of that covenant (Isaiah 28:18):⁵² “Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a *foundation stone*, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a *sure foundation*: he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isaiah 28:16, emphasis added). The imagery suggests the building of a temple, the foundation stone of which is the Lord himself. The one who “believeth,” or the one who has “faith” (*hamma’ămîn*) in that stone rests, on a “sure foundation” and consequently does not need to “make haste” (Isaiah 28:16) or will “not be confounded” (1 Peter 2:6).

The “bedrock” required for the kind of “building” of which Jesus and later Peter speaks indeed begins with and includes faith. But revealed faith—a revealed testimony that Jesus is the Christ—is only the first principle of the “doctrine” or “gospel” of Jesus Christ. As Paul put it, “For therein is the righteousness of God *revealed from faith to faith*: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”⁵³ The saints “living” now and eternally by “faith” or “faithfulness” (Heb. *’ēmûnâ*, Gk. *pistos*)—their justification and eventual sanctification—consists in their receiving and living by revelation to continually, “live...by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.”⁵⁴

Identifying the rock in the “rock”-dialogue of Matthew 16, upon which Jesus would build His Church, the Prophet Joseph

50 See Howe, “Christ, the Building Stone in Peter’s Theology.”

51 Isaiah 28:15.

52 Heb. *kuppar*.

53 Romans 1:17; quoting Habakkuk 2:4, emphasis added.

54 Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; D&C 84:44; 98:11.

Smith stated, “What rock? Revelation.”⁵⁵ Huntsman suggests that revelation of which Jesus speaks is identified in Helaman 5:12, “the apostolic testimony of Christ that comes through revelation.”⁵⁶ Indeed, here Helaman gives his sons parental exhortation and priesthood leadership instruction. They are church and temple “builders”:

And now, my sons, remember, remember *that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation*; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of *the rock* upon which ye are built, which is *a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall* (Helaman 5:12, emphasis added). Helaman commends his sons not only to build their personal foundation on Christ but also the foundation of the Nephite/Lamanite church, which his sons lead after him.⁵⁷ Nephi has his custody of the sealing power and authority affirmed in a manner not dissimilar to Jesus’s promise of the sealing keys to Peter (see Helaman 10:7). Important is that Joseph identified the “rock” as “revelation” in the context of a discussion of priesthood authority, priesthood keys, baptism, and the fruits of the kingdom of God. For the Church and its leadership to have the power in the priesthood and revelation needed for the building of Zion and God’s kingdom on the earth, priesthood authority and keys must be present and ordinances performed correctly,

55 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 274.

56 Huntsman, “Galilee and the Call of the Twelve Apostles,” 242.

57 Cf. Helaman 5:4, 18; 16:4.

which brings about a flood of revelation.⁵⁸ Thus the broad rock of the everlasting gospel includes revelation and “revealed” priesthood,⁵⁹ the ordinances performed by priesthood authority (see below), and the revealed testimony of Jesus (“the spirit of prophecy”)⁶⁰ that begins with faith in him and advances “from faith to faith” according to one’s “diligence and obedience” to the doctrine of Christ (D&C 130:19). I will now discuss this topic in more depth.

The Doctrine of Christ and the Atonement

Peter’s surnaming of Jesus, “Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God,” was a testimony of faith, a revelation, and a declaration of pure doctrine. And yet when Jesus appeared to the Nephites in 3 Nephi 11, He emphasized the importance of not only faith but also subsequent repentance and baptism. His words are directed not only to individual Church members but to Israel’s religious leaders—the “builders” of Psalm 118:22. He stated:

And again I say unto you, *ye must repent*, and become as a little child, and *be baptized in my name*, or ye can in nowise receive these things.

And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

58 See JS-H 1:73–74; D&C 84:20; D&C 110; see especially Moses 8:24.

59 I.e., its keys of authority and power; see especially D&C 2:1–2; 128:17.

60 Revelation 19:10.

And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them (3 Nephi 11:37–40, emphasis added).

Jesus's words on this occasion clarify what he meant in Matthew 7:24–26 and 16:18–19. The rock (*petra*) of which Jesus spoke on those occasions must include not only a testimony of revealed faith that Jesus is the Christ but also repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and reception of the Holy Ghost.⁶¹ Jesus's inclusion of the phrase “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them” (Matthew 16:19) confirms that he envisions the fullness of his Gospel (of which he is the focal point) as the rock on which the Church and its members are to be built. Jesus himself is the “Rock of Heaven” on which the saints as a temple are built (Moses 7:53) through the Gospel. The temple is “the gate of heaven,”⁶² and the Savior himself is the “keeper of the gate”⁶³ (2 Nephi 9:41) and even the “gate” or “door.”⁶⁴

Noel B. Reynolds has noted that Jesus alludes in 3 Nephi 11:31–36 to what Nephi and later Jacob called the “doctrine of

61 See especially 3 Nephi 11:31–36.

62 Genesis 28:17; Helaman 3:28; cf. Psalm 24:7–10.

63 John Gee, “The Keeper of the Gate,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS: 1999), 233–74. On the “keeper of the gate” or “keeper of the door” as a temple functionary, see 2 Kings 12:9; 22:4; Jeremiah 35:4; Nehemiah 3:29. See further Avram R. Shannon, “‘Come Near unto Me’: Guarded Space and Its Mediators in the Jerusalem Temple,” in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament: The 42nd Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, ed. David R. Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey (Provo, UT: RSC and Deseret Book, 2013), 66–84.

64 John 10:7, 9; cf. Moses 7:53.

Christ” or the “true points of his doctrine.”⁶⁵ His commandment to repent and be baptized is a meristic⁶⁶ reference to a six-point formula taught consistently by prophets throughout the Book of Mormon: (1) faith in Jesus Christ, (2) repentance, (3) baptism, (4) the gift of the Holy Ghost, (5) enduring to the end in faith, hope, and charity, and (6) salvation and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Reynolds suggests that a mention of one point in this formula is an implicit invocation of the entire formula. Numerous instances from the scriptures could be cited.

In 3 Nephi 18, Jesus institutes the sacrament at the temple in Bountiful among the Nephites and Lamanites in remembrance of his resurrected body⁶⁷—his rebuilt “temple.”⁶⁸ The Lord states that administration of this ordinance enables worthy partakers to remain “built” upon his “rock”—himself and his gospel:

And I give unto you a commandment that *ye shall do these things*. And if ye shall always do these things *blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock*.

But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall, and the gates of hell are ready open to receive them.⁶⁹

65 Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets,” *BYU Studies* 31/3 (1991): 31–50; Reynolds, “The True Points of My Doctrine,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 26–56.

66 A *merismus* is a literary device by which a whole is referred to by its parts.

67 John W. Welch, “Ten Testimonies of Jesus Christ from the Book of Mormon” in *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2003), 316–42.

68 Matthew 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19–22.

69 3 Nephi 18:12–13; cf. 3 Nephi 14:24–27, emphasis added.

Jesus's point is clear: worthy administration and partaking of the sacrament to and by Church members will keep them collectively and individually "built upon [the] rock" of his gospel. However, the failure of the Church and its members to so build will result in the Church's resting on a sandy foundation, susceptible to being overcome by the powers of darkness in this world and the spirit world ("the gates of hell"). Worthy partaking of the sacrament enables Church members to retain the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and thus "lay hold" on the personal revelation that will empower them to endure to the end, enter through "the gate of heaven," and to be enthroned ("sit down") at the right hand of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Helaman 3:28-30). The sacrament too, then, is another important aspect of the gospel "rock."

Later, when his Nephite and Lamanite disciples are struggling to know what to name the Church, Jesus emphasizes that a Church called in his name is his Church "if it so be that they are *built upon my gospel*" (3 Nephi 27:8, emphasis added). The image here is of a church/temple built upon bedrock. Jesus additionally promises that if the Church is "built upon my gospel," the disciples—the leaders and "builders" of the Church—can "call upon the Father, for the church...and he will hear [them]" and "the Father will show forth his own works in it" (3 Nephi 27:9-10). The Lord personally instructed Hyrum Smith: "Build upon *my rock*, which is my gospel" (D&C 11:24, emphasis added).

On the other hand, if a church is "not built upon my gospel, [but] is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil...they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return."⁷⁰ In other words, that

70 3 Nephi 27:11.

church suffers the same fate as a building built on a sandy or airy foundation.⁷¹

Recalling that the Lord's building activity in Isaiah 28 was to "atone" Israel's illicit covenant with its enemies Death and Hell,⁷² we note that the Savior also carefully defines the Gospel in 3 Nephi 27 as both His Atonement⁷³ and the ordinances necessary to fully partake of that Atonement.⁷⁴ We know from modern-day revelation that the Gospel is the same from the beginning.⁷⁵ Peter's mortal and *post-mortal* priesthood role was to build the Church upon the "doctrine of Christ."⁷⁶ This is the duty of every saint from Apostle to new member. Just as Peter had received keys in mortality, he was one of many who conferred them as an immortal messenger from God's presence. Faithful laborers of every dispensation continue the work of building in the spirit world so that ultimately hell will not prevail.⁷⁷

The "Keys of the Kingdom": Priesthood Keys and Power as Aspects of the Eternal "Bedrock"

Jesus's surnaming of Peter was an important part of his priesthood leadership training. Peter was to become the model for all future apostolic and priesthood leadership. Hebrews 7:24 describes Christ's authority as an "unchangeable priesthood," based on Psalm 110, an enthronement psalm in which the Davidic king receives the Melchizedek priesthood "eternally" with an "oath and covenant."⁷⁸ Isaiah similarly envisages the investiture of the political and priesthood authority of the Davidic king in

71 See 1 Nephi 11:36; 2 Nephi 28:18.

72 Isaiah 28:18.

73 See vv. 13–15; cf. D&C 76:40–42.

74 See vv. 16–20.

75 See Moses 6:23, 52–68; D&C 29:42.

76 D&C 27:12; 128:20; JS-H 1:72.

77 Cf. D&C 138:57–58.

78 See Psalm 110:4; cf. D&C 84:39–40.

Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, a servant of Hezekiah, evidently the royal treasurer:

*And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand:*⁷⁹ and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And *the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder*; so he shall open, and none shall shut and he shall shut, and none shall open. And *I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place* [ūtēqa'tīw yātēd bēmāqôm ne'ēmān] and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house (Isaiah 22:21–23, emphasis added).

Similar to the Lord's investiture of Eliakim, Jesus invests Peter with his (Jesus's) own royal/priestly authority (the Melchizedek priesthood authority). After the events detailed in Matthew 16–17 and 28, Peter is fully authorized to act in the Savior's stead (see below). After Jesus's resurrection, Peter continued faithfully in this surrogate role until he himself, apparently like the Savior,⁸⁰ was "fasten[ed]...as a nail in a sure place."⁸¹ Even after his death, in the spirit world and after his resurrection, Peter continued to operate in this role in building the church into a "sure house" against which "the gates of hell cannot prevail,⁸² thus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy that Zion would eventually become "a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes [yētēdōtāw = "its nails"] thereof

79 Cf. Isaiah 9:6–7.

80 It was widely believed in the early Christian church that Peter was, like the Savior, crucified, but upside down in deference to the latter; hence, the "inverted cross" of St. Peter in Christian iconography.

81 Isaiah 22:23; cf. John 21:18; "rock," especially "bedrock" is the "sure place" *par excellence*.

82 See Joseph Smith—History 1:72.

shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.”⁸³

As noted above, Isaiah alludes to the Lord's “disannulling” (“atoning”) of Israel's “covenant” with its archenemies “Death” and “Hell.”⁸⁴ The Lord accomplished this by laying for Zion's temple a Davidic king (the Lord himself) as “foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner, a sure foundation.”⁸⁵ The atonement imagery is temple imagery and temple-building imagery in particular. Jesus alludes to Isaiah's atonement and temple imagery⁸⁶ when he describes his divine authority to John: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have *the keys of hell and of death*” (Revelation 1:18, emphasis added). “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath *the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth*” (Revelation 3:7, emphasis added). Following his resurrection, the Savior declared to Peter and his other disciples, “All power [*exousia*, authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:18–19, emphasis added). Baptism is, among many things, symbolic resurrection and deliverance from the waters of Death (from Israel's enemies Mot and Yamm, or “death and hell, and the devil.”⁸⁷ The bronze “sea” (*yām*) atop the twelve oxen in the Jerusalem temple,⁸⁸ like our

83 Isaiah 33:20; cf. 54:2; Moroni 10:31.

84 Isaiah 28:18; cf. 2 Nephi 9:26.

85 Isaiah 28:16; see Helaman 5:12.

86 Isaiah chapter 22 and 28.

87 See 1 Corinthians 15:26–29; 2 Nephi 9:26; Jonah 2. On Jacob's interpretation of these motifs in 2 Nephi 6–10, see Daniel Belnap, “‘I Will Contend with Them that Contendeth with Thee’: The Divine Warrior in Jacob's Speech of 2 Nephi 6–10,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17/1 (2008) 20–39.

88 1 Kings 7:25, 44; 2 Kings 16:17; 2 Chronicles 4:3–4, 15.

modern temple baptismal fonts, symbolizes Yahweh's defeat of Yamm and Israel's redemption.⁸⁹

It is against the backdrop of Yahweh's (Jesus's) *exousia* and total power over "death, hell, and the devil" through the atonement (2 Nephi 9:26) that we need to understand Jesus's promise that he would grant Peter "the keys of the kingdom" (Matthew 16:18). Matthew recounts the fulfillment of Jesus's promise at the Mount of Transfiguration.⁹⁰ Kent Brown suggests that Peter's (along with James and John's) participation in Jesus's transfiguration—they were transfigured too—was a "partaking of the divine nature."⁹¹ If Jesus, as Yahweh, was the "bedrock" of eternity,⁹² Peter, James, and John, the future "First Presidency" of the Church, like Moses⁹³ who bestowed keys on this occasion, had become that "bedrock" if only for a few moments. This "First Presidency," a pattern on earth of the Presidency of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in heaven, had then tasted what Jesus had in mind for them to become as well as what he was authorizing and empowering them in the priesthood to members of his Church to eventually become.

Peter's attention at this moment turns to the temple. His suggestion that they build three "tabernacles"⁹⁴ reflects his incomplete understanding of the meaning and function of temples (Luke 9:33). Peter witnessed that Moses, Elijah, and the Savior were "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Temples are in fact connected with the "divine nature," preparing men and women to become partakers therein. Peter here received keys that would empower him to bind or "seal"

89 Cf. Exodus 15:1-22; Isaiah 51:9-11.

90 See Matthew 17:1-9.

91 Brown, "The Twelve," 119-20.

92 See Moses 7:53; Isaiah 26:4.

93 See Moses 1 Moses 1:1-2, 11-15, 25.

94 See Matthew 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33.

the blessings of exaltation upon the saints, including eternal power in the priesthood.⁹⁵

Moreover, it is appropriate that Jesus reiterated Simon's "new name," Peter, on the eve of his receiving priesthood keys. In bestowing these keys on Peter, the Lord conferred his own authority, to "open, and none shall shut," to "shut and none shall open";⁹⁶ to "bind on earth [in order to have] bound in heaven"⁹⁷ or to "seal on earth [in order to have] sealed in heaven."⁹⁸ To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a *white stone* [*psephos*], and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."⁹⁹ For entrants into the celestial kingdom, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained in 1843 this "new name is *the key word*" (D&C 130:11, emphasis added).

The "new name" is a "key" that opens the way, as Brigham Young indicated, for the saints to pass "the angels who stand as sentinels...and gain [their] eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell."¹⁰⁰ The "key of the knowledge of God"¹⁰¹ is the "key of knowledge" or "fullness of the scriptures"¹⁰² that unlocks exaltation. Indeed, "the sealing and binding power, and...the keys of the kingdom...consist in the key of knowledge" (D&C 128:14) that unlocks every blessing to the children of God on both sides of the veil.

95 Cf. 1 Peter 2:5; D&C 121:36, 46.

96 Isaiah 22:22; Revelation 3:7.

97 Matthew 16:19.

98 Helaman 10:7; cf. 2 Nephi 30:17.

99 Revelation 2:17; cf. Isaiah 62:2, emphasis added.

100 *Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1954), 637.

101 D&C 84:19.

102 JST Luke 11:52.

The Church as “Sure House[s]”: Priesthood and Temple Ordinances as Eternal “Bedrock”

Joseph Smith spoke of baptism for the dead as an “ordinance... instituted from before the foundation of the world” (D&C 124:33). In D&C 128:5, he stated that vicarious ordinance work for the dead was “only to answer the will of God, by conforming to the ordinance and preparation that the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world, for the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel.” In D&C 128:8 the Prophet spoke of “ordinances” that needed to be attended to “in their own propria persona, or by the means of their own [vicarious] agents, according to the ordinance that God has prepared for their salvation from before the foundation of the world.” The Prophet here quotes Jesus and Peter’s “rock”-dialogue (Matthew 16:18-19). Ordinances require priesthood authority and keys.

The concept of “ordinances” that were “instituted” or “ordained and prepared” before the foundation of the world for the salvation of the human family is consistent with the picture revealed to Joseph Smith of a baptism and confirmation of Adam (Moses 6:52-58), Enoch’s commission to baptize (Moses 7:11), and so forth. Priesthood ordinances, including vicarious ordinances for the dead, are eternal “bedrock” that antedates even the foundation of the world. Even the dead against whom hell has previously “prevailed” can “be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God” (D&C 138:58).¹⁰³

Jesus knew that his church, over which Peter would preside, had to be collectively and individually built upon the “rock” of revealed testimony, obedience to gospel (including temple) ordinances, priesthood power, and the Savior himself

103 I.e., the doctrine of Christ and its ordinances, see Articles of Faith 1:4; JST Hebrews 6:1.

to become the “sure house” that the dynastic royal “houses” never were, a manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth, a “house” against which the gates of hell could not prevail. The Lord had offered to build David, Jeroboam, and others a “sure house” (Heb. *bayit ne’ēmān*).¹⁰⁴ David’s royal “house,” whose last regnant (excluding Jesus himself who never reigned temporally over Israel) was Zedekiah, became an “unsure” dynasty because of David and his descendants’ sins. D&C 132:39 informs us that because David has “fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them [i.e., his family, his “house”] out of the world.” The Jerusalem temple on its “rock” was both the “house of the Lord” and a monument to the Davidic dynasty and the Lord’s promises to David. That temple has been repeatedly razed, emblematic of David’s fortunes. Fortunately, temples today dot the earth, and the “houses” (families) can become “sure houses” through covenant faithfulness, obedience, and the exercise of priesthood keys.

The Church of Jesus Christ is heir to—and arguably the fulfillment of—the Lord’s promises of “sure houses” to Israel’s kings. In other words, the Church, its families, and its temples are Jesus’s “sure house.”¹⁰⁵ Peter himself learned that revealed testimony and covenant obedience could make “lively stones”¹⁰⁶ out of individual church members and a “spiritual house” (Gk. *oikos pneumatikos*) out of them collectively. The Church in any age is only a “spiritual house” or a “sure house” to the degree the saints themselves—collectively, individually, and by family—are “founded” on the Savior and his Gospel. The Church is in a real sense a temple¹⁰⁷ like the Jerusalem temple that stood on

104 See 1 Samuel 2:35; 25:28; 2 Samuel 7:16; 1 Kings 11:38.

105 Compare 1 Samuel 2:35; 25:8; 2 Samuel 7:16; 1 Kings 11:38 versus D&C 132:39.

106 I.e., “living stones,” *lithoi zōntes*, 1 Peter 2:5

107 Cf. T. Fornberg, “Peter—the High Priest of the New Covenant?” *East Asia Journal of Theology* 4/1 (1986): 113–21.

the temple mount (Moriah) the “rock” of Zion. The exercise of the priesthood sealing keys that Peter once received enable individual families within the walls of modern-day temples to become “sure houses,” the “sure house” being one of the most important things the temple symbolizes.¹⁰⁸ The exercise of these keys also makes it collectively possible for the House of Israel to become a “sure house” against which hell cannot prevail—the “sure” house that it was always meant to be, “sure” like the Savior himself.

“The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail”: Endowed to Endure

Even the best of us begin like Peter. As President Gordon B. Hinckley has observed,

So many of us are so much like [Peter]. We pledge our loyalty; we affirm our determination to be of good courage; we declare, sometimes even publicly, that come what may we will do the right thing, that we will stand for the right cause, that we will be true to ourselves and to others. Then the pressures begin to build...There is a weakening of the will. There is a softening of discipline. There is capitulation. And then there is remorse, followed by self-accusation and bitter tears of regret.”¹⁰⁹

But by founding ourselves on Christ and his gospel—his “rock”—we become like the converted seer Peter (see Acts 10), who could declare without hesitation the necessity of obeying

¹⁰⁸ Latter-day temples are built on higher, safer ground (or as near to it as can be found in a locale), often on mountains or hills (cf. the expression mount[ain]/hill of the Lord). Temples are conceptually “buil[t] on [the] rock” and, as architectural representations of mountains, temples constitute “bedrock” themselves (cf. the granite of the Salt Lake Temple). In this way too they represent the Savior and the “temple” of his body.

¹⁰⁹ Gordon B. Hinckley, “And Peter Went Out and Wept Bitterly,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 65.

God in all conditions and under all circumstances (see Acts 5:29). As Richard Lloyd Anderson has noted, “Peter proclaimed repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38; 8:14ff),”¹¹⁰ (i.e., he lived—cf. 1st John 4:1–2) and preached the doctrine of Christ fearlessly. Simon the “hearer” became Peter the wise “builder” (see Matthew 7:24). We are to do likewise.

Peter obtained the “keys of the kingdom” and thus “the key of knowledge” (D&C 128:14), even “the key of the knowledge of God” (D&C 84:19). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that

A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge and consequently more power than many men on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God.¹¹¹

We gain the knowledge and revelation we need to avoid being “brought down into captivity” here and hereafter¹¹² only to the degree that we obey (“hear”!) the doctrine of Christ—faith, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost (and the ordinances of the house of God), and enduring to the end. The endowment of power and knowledge that Peter and the disciples received (see Luke 24:49) is offered to the Latter-day Saints to enable them to fulfill their earthly missions and to “gain their eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.”¹¹³

The promise that the Lord made to Peter in Matthew 16 is extended to the Latter-day Saints, and perhaps no promise

110 Anderson, “Simon Peter,” 47; see also Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 4.17.

111 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:588; Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 217.

112 1 Nephi 14:2, 7; 2 Nephi 1:7.

113 *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 637.

is made more often in modern-day revelation: if we “build up [the Lord’s] church, upon the foundation of my gospel and my rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against [us]” (D&C 8:9) and “whosoever is of my church, and endureth of my church to the end, *him will I establish upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them*” (D&C 10:69, emphasis added). Likewise, the Latter-day Saints who obey the doctrine of Christ (i.e., “do these last commandments of mine which I have given you”), the Lord promises, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; for my grace is sufficient for you, and you shall be lifted up at the last day” (D&C 17:8-9). “For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory” (D&C 21:6). “And again I say unto you, if ye observe to do whatsoever I command you, I, the Lord, will turn away all wrath and indignation from you, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you” (D&C 98:22). Obedience to the doctrine of Christ—building upon his rock through the power of the priesthood¹¹⁴—is the way. Jesus himself was obedient to “the very points of his doctrine” (2 Nephi 31:7) in becoming like the Father and receiving his fulness, and Simon Peter was “obedient” in becoming like Jesus. Just as Jesus invited Peter, so he invites us to become partakers of the divine nature: “Follow thou me.”¹¹⁵

Conclusion

Simon Peter, like Enoch¹¹⁶ and Samuel¹¹⁷ became not only a constant “hearer” of the divine word but a constant, rock-

114 I.e., the Lord’s “everlasting strength,” Isaiah 26:4.

115 2 Nephi 31:10; cf. John 21:22.

116 Moses 6:27, 35-39; 7:2-69.

117 1 Samuel 3:9-10; 9:18-19.

like “seer.”¹¹⁸ The Lord himself quoted Peter’s own teaching on repentance and baptism (“repent and be baptized every one of you,” Acts 2:38) when he identified faith in Christ and the ordinances of the gospel as the rock on which we need to build and “continue.”¹¹⁹ The “rock” upon which Jesus promised that he would build his Church includes revealed faith that Jesus is the Christ, repentance, baptism (partaking of the sacrament), receiving the Holy Ghost and the ordinances of the house of God, which empowers the saints to have the needed revelation and knowledge to endure to the end in spite of “hell” (the powers of darkness in the spirit world).

Peter, who in mortality understood that the gospel would be preached to the dead in prison,¹²⁰ has labored in the Savior’s building or restoration (*oikodomeō*) of his church *on both sides of the veil*. Because of Peter and others’ power in the priesthood, hell has never fully prevailed against Christ’s church, particularly in the spirit world during the Great Apostasy. As Latter-day Saints participate in temple ordinances on behalf of the dead, their collective “house” and individual houses are made eternally “sure,” and hell ceases to “prevail.” They become more like the Savior, the Rock of Ages, against whose work hell is ultimately destined to fail.

Matthew L. Bowen was raised in Orem, Utah and graduated from Brigham Young University. He is completing a PhD in Biblical Studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC and is currently an Assistant Professor in Religious Education at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. He and his wife (the former Suzanne Blattberg) are the parents of three children: Zachariah, Nathan, and Adele.

118 Matthew 7:42; JST John 1:42; Acts 5:29; see especially Acts 17:9-48.

119 D&C 33:11-13.

120 1 Peter 3:18-19; 4:6.

The author would like to thank Daniel Peterson, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Alison Coutts, Anna Kaanga, Maurya Brand, Ko'olina Mills, and Reva C. Bowen.

